the facts ABOUT THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

A monthly bulletin produced by « The Arab Women's Information Committee, The Friends of Jerusalem ».

Supplement for March 1968

WHEN THE SOLDIERS CRIED

WEST BANK STORY

The following reports are extracts from two letters by Israeli soldiers which were published. after the war in June, in a British magazine called « PRIVATE EYE » on the 10th of November 1967. The same reports were also printed in a recent anti-Zionist publication called « THE ISRAELI IMPERIAL NEWS », edited by Sh. TZABAR, himself an anti-Zionist Israeli. The first issue of « The IMPERIAL NEWS » has just appeared in London, in March 1968.

And the King of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them : My father, shall I smite them ? shall I smite them ? And he answered, thou shalt not smite them wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and thy bow ? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink. And he prepared great provision for them and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away. And the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

KINGS II. 6. (21-23).

Among the many political problems confronting plucky little Israel in the aftermath of the June war is the principle of one man, one vote. The principle has been rigorously maintained throughout the history of the state of Israel, in which, before last June's war, there were 2.1 million Jews and approximately 200,000 Arabs. In the 'new Israel', however, — that is the old country plus the lands conquered in the war — there are 2.1 m. Jews and approximately 1.5 m. Arabs. Given a higher birth rate among Arabs, one man one vote in a new, bigger Israel could eventually mean an Arab majority, or, at least, a multi-racial state.

No one doubts now that Israel will take over almost all the territory which she took by force. The only serious question is whether or not she will seize the Suez canal, and, 'in the interests of all nations', open it as an 'international waterway'. But the problem for all true-blooded Jews is : how to annexe all that land without giving votes to the people who live on it.

What a pity, then, that, for some unexplained reason, more publicity has not been given to the simple solution as effected by the Israeli army — that is : first, unsettle the Arab villages in the West Bank area whose inhabitants have not yet flown to Jordan; and second, make sure that the minimum of refugees who have crossed the Jordan return to their homes.

Such a policy is admirably effective. Yet the reports from the Jordan border by a number of reservist soldiers in the Israeli army have not been given full publicity by the Israeli press.

ISRAEL IMPERIAL NEWS
1968 MARCH · 1/9
Has the Mirages got vertical takeoff?
THE VACATION MAGAZINE FOR PEOPLE WHO WANT TO FIGHT WITH A SENSE OF HISTORY

This is an eye witness report of a soldier who wishes to remain anonymous about the massacres of refugees carried out after the war. His story has been corroborated by other soldiers whose names we have but cannot reveal for the same reasons.

The report concerns the sector on the Jordan river between the Yormuk and the Allenby bridge. The time is the end of July and the beginning of August. The report was given in Tel-Aviv, 10 September 1967.

« Every night Arabs cross the Jordan from East to West. We blocked the passages (i.e. the places where the river is shallow and can be crossed by foot) and were ordered to shoot to kill without warning. Indeed, we fired shots every night on men, women, and children. Even during moonlit nights when we could identify the people, that is — distinguish between men, women, and children. In the mornings we searched the area and, by explicit order from the officer on the spot, shot the living, including those who did or were wounded. After killing them we covered them with earth or sometimes left them lying there until a bulldozer came to bury them. Some of these people are intelligence agents; some are armed infiltrators; some are smugglers. Mostly though they are former inhabitants of the West Bank who have not received an Israeli permit to return. There were some cases I'll never forget. One morning we found two men, unwounded. The officer ordered us to kill them and we shot them on the spot. Once we found two men wounded in their legs. We talked to them, took their papers, and then the officer ordered us to kill them. They understood from our gestures what went on and desperately pleaded for their lives. We all left the place except one who volunteered to kill them. He had to fire six times before they were dead. The stories are many. I'm only telling of events I saw with my own eyes, but stories by other soldiers are abundant. I heard of soldiers setting fire to heaps of bodies.

One morning I saw bodies in a heap, among them was a young girl. On another occasion an El-Fatah man pleaded for his life; when he saw it was useless he cursed us and took the bullets. One night a group of about twenty crossed. We shot them. In the morning we found 11 bodies. Some were found hiding, unharmed. We caught them and sent them back to the East bank, unharmed.

During the time of my service, long after the war, we fired shots in our sector every night. Every night people were shot; every morning the wounded were killed. So too were those who were caught unwounded.

I am disclosing this information in the hope that it will become known to as many Israeli citizens as possible. Perhaps some could influence these events and stop them. »

Some of the facts revealed in these two accounts are known to many people in Israel, yet, owing to consideration of 'national interest' they are kept secret from snooping foreigners and are never published in the press.

The press did however mention briefly that the cabinet, in its weekly meeting discussed the issue of « purity of the Israeli arms » — an expression that has a very definite meaning in Israel. It is used whenever atrocities are committed by the army and come to the knowledge of the public.

This is an eye witness account by the writer and journalist Amos Kenan who sent it as a private letter to politicians, members of the Knesset and newspapers. Although Mr. Kenan did not want this document made public on the grounds that it would embarrass the Israel government, we decided to ignore this.

The unit commander told us that it had been decided to blow up three villages in our sector; they were Beit-Nuba, Amaos, and Yalu. This was explained by strategic, tactical, and security considerations. First — to straighten the border at Latrun. Second — to punish the bases of murderers. Third — to prevent the setting up of bases for future infiltration. One can argue about this idiotic concept of collective punishment, which believes that if an infiltrator loses one house he will not find another. One can argue about the expediency of increasing the number of our future enemies. But what is the use of arguing ?

We were told to search the houses of the village, to take prisoners any armed men. Unarmed people were to be allowed to pack

up their belongings and to be told to go to the nearby village of Beit-Sura. We were ordered to block the entrances of the village and prevent inhabitants returning to the village from their hideouts, after they had heard Israeli broadcasts urging them to go back to their homes. The order was to shoot over their heads and tell them not to enter the village.

Beit Nuba is built of fine quarry stones; some of the houses are magnificent. Every house is surrounded by an orchard, olives trees, apricots, vines, and presses. They are well kept. Among the trees there are carefully tended vegetable beds.

In the houses we found one wounded Egyptian commando officer, and some very old people. At noon the first bulldozer arrived and pulled down the first house at the edge of the village. Within 10 minutes the house was turned into rubble, including its entire contents; the olive trees, cypresses were all uprooted... After the destruction of three houses the first refugee column arrived from the direction of Ramallah.

We did not fire into the air but took cover, some Arabic speaking soldiers went over to notify them of the warning. There were old people who could hardly walk, murmuring old women, mothers carrying babies, small children. The children wept and asked for water. They all carried white flags.

We told them to go to Beit-Sura. They told us that they were driven out everywhere, forbidden to enter any village, that they were wandering like this for four days, without food, without water, some dying on the road. They asked to return to the village, and said we had better kill them.

Some had a goat, a lamb, a donkey or camel. A father ground wheat by hand to feed his four children. On the horizon we could see the next group arriving. A man carrying 100 lbs of flour in a sack — he had walked like that, mile after mile. More old people, more women, more babies. They dropped down exhausted where we told them to sit. Some had a cow or two, a calf; all their property on earth. We did not allow them to enter the village and take anything.

The children cried. Some of our soldiers started crying too. We went to fetch the Arabs some water. We stopped a car with a major, two captains and a woman. We took a jerrican of water and distributed it to the refugees. We also handed out cigarettes and candy. More soldiers burst into tears. We asked the officers why these refugees were sent one place to another and driven out of everywhere. They told us that this was good for them, they should go. « moreover », said the officers, « why do we care about the Arabs anyway ? » We were glad to hear that half an hour later these officers were all detained by the military police because their car was full of booty.

More and more columns of refugees arrived, until there were hundreds of them. They failed to understand why they have been asked to return yet not permitted to enter. We could not stand their pleading. One asked us why we destroyed their houses instead of taking them over ourselves.

The platoon commander decided to go to headquarters and find out if there were any orders about what to do with them, where to send them, and whether it was possible to arrange transport for the women and food for the children. He returned saying that there were no orders in writing, simply that they were to be driven out.

We drove them out. They go on wandering in the south like lost cattle. The weak die. In the evening we found out that we had been taken in, for in Beit-Sura too bulldozers had begun to destroy the place and they were not allowed to enter We found out that not only in our sector was the border straightened out for security reasons but in all the other sectors too. The promise in the radio was not kept; the declared policy was never carried out.

Our unit was outraged. The refugees gnashed their teeth when they saw the bulldozers pull down the trees. At night we were ordered to guard the bulldozers, but the unit was so outraged that no soldier was willing to carry on such duties. In the morning we were moved from the area. None of us understood how Jews could behave like this. Even those who justified the action said that at least it should have been possible to keep the Arabs in some camp until a final decision concerning

their fate was taken, and they could be transported, with their belongings somewhere else. No one understood why shouldn't these felaheens be allowed to take their stove, blankets and some food.
The chickens and doves were buried in the rubble. The fields were turned into waste land in front of our eyes. The children who went crying on the road will be Fedayeen in 19 years, in the next round.

Thus we have lost the victory.

PRIVATE EYE ADDS :

For the information of those readers who are kind enough to flood this office with letters pointing out that stories such as the above are clear evidence of our fascist antisemitism, we would point out that Amos Kenan, the anonymous soldier and the prophet Elisha are all Jews.

FOOTNOTES

WEST BANK STORY

●*And the King of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them: My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them? And he answered, thou shalt not smite them: wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink.. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away.. And the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.*
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Such a policy is admirably effective. Yet the reports from the Jordan border by a number of reservist soldiers in the Israeli army have not been given full publicity by the Israeli press. The Jewish writer, Amos Kenan, for instance, was called up to serve his country in that area, and, on return, gave a long interview to the Israeli weekly paper, *Haolam Hazeh*. The interview was taken down, typed and signed by Kenan. But it has never been published. Here is an extract:

"The unit commander told us that it had been decided to blow up three villages in our sector; they are Beit-Nuba, Amaos, and Yalu. This was explained by strategic, tactical and security considerations. The objects were, first, to straighten the border at Latrun; second, to punish the bases of murderers; third, to prevent bases from future infiltrators.

We were told to search the houses of the village, to take prisoner any armed men. Unarmed people were to be allowed to pack up their belongings and to be told to go to the nearby village of Beit-Sura. We were ordered to block the entrances of the village and prevent inhabitants returning from their hideouts, after they had heard Israeli broadcasts urging them to return to their homes, from entering the village. The order was to shoot over their heads and tell them not to enter the village.

In the houses we found one wounded Egyptian commando officer, and some very old people. At noon the first bulldozer arrived and pulled down the first house at the edge of the village. Within 10 minutes the house was turned into rubble. The olive trees, cypresses were all uprooted. After the destruction of three houses the first refugee column arrived from the direction of Ramallah.

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We drove them out. They go on wandering in the south like lost cattle. The weak die. In the evening we found out that we have been deceived for in Beit-Sura too bulldozers commenced destruction and they were forbidden to enter. We found out that not only in our sector was the border straightened out for security reasons but in all sectors. The promise in the radio was not kept, the declared policy was never carried out.

Our unit was outraged. At night we were ordered to guard the bulldozers, but the unit was so outraged that no soldier was willing to carry on such duties. In the morning we were moved from the area. None of us understood how could Jews behave like this.

The chicken and doves were buried in the rubble. The fields were turned into waste land in front of our eyes. The children who went crying on the road will be Fedayeen in 19 years, in the next round. Thus have we lost on that day the victory.

Amos KENAN.

Haolam Hazeh and other Israeli newspapers have also been approached by several other reservist soldiers in the West Bank area, with exciting stories of their exploits. Once again, however, only a selection have been published. One statement, from a young soldier in the 5th Reservist Division, was also taken down in the offices of *Haolam Hazeh*, whence it has reached us. Some of the statement was reprinted in a pamphlet called 'Fed Up' which was seized almost as soon as it appeared in Tel Aviv. The distributors are still awaiting trial for breach of security regulations. After an interview with Shalom Cohen, co-editor of *Haolam Hazeh*, the following statement was produced:

Tel Aviv, Sept. 10th, 1967.

"I am a soldier who wishes to remain anonymous. The following information concerns the sector on the Jordan river between the Yarmuk and the Allenby bridge. The time: end of July and beginning of August.

Every night Arabs cross the Jordan from East to West. We blocked the passages (i.e. the places where the river is shallow and can be crossed by foot) we were ordered to shoot to kill without warning. Indeed, we fired such shots every night on men, women and children. Even during moonlit nights when we could identify the people, that is - distinguish between men, women and children. In the mornings we searched the area and, by explicit order from the officer on the spot, shot the living, including those who hid, or were wounded (again: including the women and children).

After killing them we covered them with earth, sometimes left them lying until a bulldozer came to bury them. Some of these people are intelligence agents, some are armed infiltrators, some are smugglers, mostly however they are former inhabitants of the West bank who have not received an Israeli permit to return.

There were some cases I'll never forget.

One morning I saw bodies in a heap, among them was a young girl. On another occasion an El-Fatah man pleaded for his life, when he saw it was useless he cursed us and took the bullets. One night a group of about twenty crossed. We shot them. In the morning we found 11 bodies. Some were found hiding, unharmed. We caught them and sent them back to the East bank, unharmed.

During the time of my service, long after the war, we fired, in our sector, every night. Every night people were shot, every morning the wounded were killed. So too were those who were caught unwounded."

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« Private Eye »

10th November 1967

Other Publications of our Committee include :

(1) The Facts, a monthly bulletin

(2) Supplements & pamphlets :

A — Israel & the Demilitarized Zones
B — Israel & the United Nations
C — The Big Lie of the Boots
D — Israeli Peaceful Intentions
E — Collusion 1967
F — Israel's Expanding Frontiers
G — Occupation & the Law

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